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Residential Permit Parking Programs in Alexandria and Other Jurisdictions

Background Information for the Purposes of Updating the Residential Permit Parking Program for the City of Alexandria

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	2
CREATING, MODIFYING, AND REMOVING DISTRICTS	3
CREATING A NEW DISTRICT	3
MODIFYING/REMOVING A DISTRICT	3
SIZE OF DISTRICTS.....	4
RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS.....	4
SURVEY REQUIREMENTS.....	4
PETITION REQUIREMENTS	5
STAFF AUTHORITY	5
PERMIT TYPES	6
VISITOR/GUEST PERMITS	8
COMMERCIAL PERMITS.....	8
HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYEE PERMITS.....	9
EDUCATIONAL PERMITS	9
OTHER PERMITS.....	9
PERMIT FEES.....	9
COMMON PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS.....	13
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF OTHER JURISDICTIONS.....	13
VIRTUAL RPP PROGRAMS	14
CONCLUSION/CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALEXANDRIA	14
APPENDIX – RPP SIGNAGE	16

Introduction

Many communities utilize Residential Permit Parking (RPP) programs to balance competing demands for on-street parking by nonresidents (e.g., commuters, retail traffic, special event venues) and City residents. This is the case in Alexandria where the City has designated certain areas as RPP districts for nearly 40 years to address residents' concerns about non-resident parking on local streets, particularly in Old Town and residential areas near Metro stations.

The City of Alexandria is currently analyzing its current RPP program to determine if it still meets the City's parking managements goals, and whether specific changes are needed.

This report provides a summary of research of RPP programs in other jurisdictions. Specific details can be found in the RPP Comparison Matrix. This research into RPP programs in other jurisdictions will assist Alexandria's review and analysis of the City's existing RPP program and corresponding City Code sections. The study team collected information for RPP programs in the following 13 jurisdictions (in addition to Alexandria):

- Arlington, VA
- Washington, DC
- Takoma Park, MD
- Montgomery County, MD
- Annapolis, MD
- Richmond, VA
- Williamsburg, VA
- Charleston, SC
- Savannah, GA
- Boston, MA
- Pittsburgh, PA
- New Orleans, LA
- San Francisco, CA

Much of the information gathered for each jurisdiction was obtained from the local RPP informational website and in the city code. All of these jurisdictions provided additional information regarding their RPP programs in response to questions asked by the study team as a supplement to program details gathered from respective RPP webpages.

This report highlights:

- Major characteristics of each RPP program
- Common elements and characteristics across all (or most) RPP programs
- Unique or noteworthy characteristics of RPP programs
- Innovative policies that support parking management in residential areas
- Noteworthy challenges and/or areas identified by RPP program managers as needing to be revised or improved

The specific jurisdictions to research and the aspects of RPP programs to be documented were provided by Alexandria in the scope for this project.

Creating, Modifying, and Removing Districts

Creating a New District

The current process for creating a new district in Alexandria requires a petition be signed by more than 50 percent of the residents in a proposed RPP district. City staff then conduct a field survey, and if the requirements of the Code are met, the request is scheduled for a public hearing before the Traffic and Parking Board. The Board makes a recommendation to the City Council which makes the final decision about the creation of the district.

The process for creating a new district or parking area can take upwards of a year in many jurisdictions.

- Generally, the process begins with a petition from residents of the area requesting the RPP district.
- From there, the petition must meet the requirements set forth in the city code. In addition to a community petition, there are also generally residential and survey requirements that must be met.

These vary for each jurisdiction, but patterns can be seen in the sections below.

Once the requirements are met, there is usually a review by either a Mayor, Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works, or City Council. Some jurisdictions require approval from more than one entity, most commonly a transportation board and City Council. Following approval from the governmental body, public hearings often begin.

After the parking area is created, the next steps are (generally) to install signage and issue permits to the residents. This can happen immediately, within three months, or beginning the next fiscal year for the local government.

Modifying/Removing a District

The study examined differences between modifying or removing a district and creating a new district. The current process for modifying or removing a district in Alexandria involves the same process as creating a new district (see above). As with Alexandria, the process for modifying or removing an existing district for most jurisdictions is similar to creating a new one. Amending or removing RPP generally begins with a petition from residents requesting a change to the parking program. From there, the same requirements for creating a new parking area must be satisfied to modify existing parking areas.

Minor expansions or eliminations can take significantly less time than creating a new district. In San Francisco, it takes only four months to make a minor modification, whereas creating a new district in that city can take two to three years. This is because the public engagement necessary is significantly less for modification than what is required for a new district.

Another reason amendments are less time intensive is because the proposal may not have to go through as much review. In Pittsburgh, a minor change does not require City Planning approval, nor does it require a Council hearing.

In Montgomery County, district amendments become more common as the size of the district increases. If residents are experiencing issues due to intra-area commuting, they can file a petition and undergo the same steps that are used to create a new district. Once the requirements are met, Montgomery County DOT determines if intra-commuting is occurring.

Size of Districts

Currently, Alexandria has a minimum size requirement of 400 spaces for a new district and no maximum size. Like Alexandria, none of the jurisdictions in this study have maximum sizes for parking districts. Some jurisdictions, however, have minimum sizes for newly proposed parking districts. Some of the minimum size requirements include:

- One block face
- Ten contiguous block faces
- A minimum of one-mile of street frontage
- At least 50 permits

Several jurisdictions indicated the lack of a maximum size district causes issues with intra-area commuting. Due to this issue, the jurisdictions expressed a need to have a maximum size such as half a square mile.

Residential Requirements

Many jurisdictions require proposed residential parking areas to meet a certain percentage of residential properties. In some places, this is quantified as needing at least 75 percent of the properties on the proposed block to be residential. This is the case in Alexandria, which requires that 75 percent of buildings be used for residential purposes. In some jurisdictions, the requirement is more loosely defined as “majority residential”. This could be interpreted as at least half of the properties need to be residential to qualify for the RPP program.

Survey Requirements

Survey requirements for establishing RPP areas vary among jurisdictions. A common requirement, however, is that at least 75 percent of the curb space is occupied. This is the case in Alexandria, where 75 percent of the spaces must be occupied, and of those vehicles, 25 percent must be owned by nonresidents of the district. In other jurisdictions, some of the additional survey requirements include that a certain percentage of the curb space is occupied by non-residents. This percentage occupied by non-resident vehicles varies from a minimum of 15 percent up to a minimum of 50 percent. Most commonly, the requirement is for at least 25 percent of the curb space to be occupied by non-residents.

Petition Requirements

Currently, Alexandria requires that petitions for RPP be signed by at least 50 percent of the residents abutting a block face. For overnight RPP districts, a higher percentage is required – at least 66 and 2/3 percent.

The most common requirement for establishing RPP areas is to create a petition signed by at least 50 percent of the households within the proposed parking area. Some jurisdictions require as high as 70 percent of the households in the area. In some jurisdictions, the city code specifies that only one signature per household is allowed on the petition and those that sign must be at least 18 years old.

Staff Authority

In most jurisdictions – including Alexandria – the creation or alteration of RPP areas must be initiated by residents. However, in several cities examined for this study, local government staff can create and/or amend RPP areas.

- In Washington DC, the DDOT Director has the authority to create or alter blocks with RPP restrictions.
- In Pittsburgh, staff can create or amend zones, but amendments must be approved by City Council and they generally will require evidence of a community process before the Council will approve a change.
- In San Francisco, the SFMTA staff may recommend on its own initiative to the SFMTA Board of Directors the designation, removal, or modification of RPP areas.
- In Williamsburg, VA, the City Manager may prohibit or limit nonresident parking during hours when the number of nonresident vehicles parked on such streets of the regulated area is found to exceed the limits specified in the Code.
- In Montgomery County, changes to RPP restrictions are generally initiated by residents. But in special situations, such as planning for the Metro Purple Line, County staff can initiate changes to RPP zones or districts.

The ability for planners, traffic engineers and other city staff to create or alter RPP areas recognizes their hands-on and real-time insights and knowledge regarding current and future parking conditions in the community. Giving staff the ability to initiate changes can also expedite implementation or modification of RPP in response to rapidly changing conditions. Montgomery County noted that RPP guided by Executive Regulation has detailed rules, and the more detailed, the more difficult to manage. City staff with the ability to create or alter RPP areas are generally expected to consult with the affected community and inform them of any changes, and often hold public hearings.

Permit Types

The research into RPP programs identified many different types of residential parking permits, as shown in Table 1. Most of the permits are valid for one year. A few programs issue two-year permits for a slightly higher fee. All study locations require verification of the permit holder's address. Some jurisdictions also require verification from the state's motor vehicle department that the vehicle is registered to the correct address.

TABLE 1: PERMIT TYPES IN EACH JURISDICTION STUDIED

Jurisdiction	Visitor/ Guest Permits	Contractor Permit	Commercial /Business Permit	Property Owner/ Landlord Permit	Healthcare Permit	Childcare Permit	Student Permit	Educational Staff Permit	Other Permits
Alexandria, VA	X	X			X				
Annapolis, MD	X				X				Temporary ¹
Arlington, VA	X			X					Temporary ¹
Boston, MA					X				
Charleston, SC	X	X			X				
Montgomery County, MD	X	X			X	X	X		Military/ Government
New Orleans, LA	X			X			X		Temporary ¹
Pittsburgh, PA	X		X						
Richmond, VA	X	X							
San Francisco, CA	X	X ²	X		X	X		X	Fire Station, Foreign Consulate
Savannah, GA	X								
Takoma Park, MD	X		X						
Washington, DC	X	X			X				Temporary ¹ , Reciprocity
Williamsburg, VA	X								Special Event

¹ Temporary permits are generally used for residents that have applied for a residential parking permit but may not have yet received the official placard/sticker. They can also be used when the resident obtains a new vehicle or rental car.

² \$1,602 per permit per year; allows a contractor's vehicle to be parked in any RPP Area in the City.

Visitor/Guest Permits

Alexandria issues guest permits and visitor permits, as do all jurisdictions in the study except Boston. The issuance of visitor/guest permits ranged from being a free yearly permit for each household, to a paid yearly permit, to paid daily permits. Some jurisdictions issue guest permits for an extended period of time such as 7 days, 15 days, or even 30 days. The visitor policy for each study area is shown in Table 2:

TABLE 2: VISITOR PERMIT FEES

Jurisdiction	Fees
Alexandria, VA	Guest permit - free; Visitor permit - free for 7 or fewer days, \$5 for more than 7 days up to 30 days
Annapolis, MD	1-day visitor parking permit (\$3.50), 10 pack of 1-day passes (\$35)
Arlington, VA	1-year visitor permit for up to three consecutive days (1 free)
Boston, MA	No visitor permits
Charleston, SC	Rental property residents may purchase up to 14 one-day permits per six months, Property owners may purchase up to three booklets with 30 one-day permits
Montgomery County, MD	1-year visitor permit (\$20), 7-day temporary permit (free), 30-day temporary permit (free)
New Orleans, LA	1-year visitor permit (\$30), 1-day visitor parking permit (\$4.00)
Pittsburgh, PA	1-year visitor permit (\$1.00); Prepaid One-Day Permits: 1-5: (\$6/permit), 6-15: (\$8/permit), 16-20: (\$12/permit)
Richmond, VA	1-year visitor parking permit (\$35), 10-day courtesy permit (\$10)
San Francisco, CA	1 day = \$6 to \$12 per day depending on number of visitor permits purchased. \$240 for 20 visitor permits.
Savannah, GA	2-week visitor permit (free)
Takoma Park, MD	1-year visitor permit (2 free)
Washington, DC	1-year visitor permit (1 free)
Williamsburg, VA	Can purchase up to two visitor permits per property

Commercial Permits

Alexandria issues Contractor permits to firms doing business with a resident. These permits are limited to three permits at one time, with a limit of 30 days. Permits are not issued for employees of businesses located within RPP districts.

There are several types of commercial permits that can be obtained to allow parking within RPP areas. Takoma Park, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco issue permits to businesses located within RPP areas, but such permits are very limited (usually 1-3 allowed per business). Another type of commercial permit is for contractors working on a nearby construction site but are generally limited by quantity and the length of time the permit is valid. Charleston requires evidence of a building permit linked to the property address. There are also contractor permits

that allow contractors to park in citywide RPP areas to provide household services. Lastly, some jurisdictions issue property owner and landlord permits, which are generally limited to one per property.

Household Employee Permits

Currently, Alexandria issues permits to healthcare providers who provide services at the home of a resident within an RPP. The City has received comments about whether permits for childcare employees in homes, such as nannies, should be allowed, but currently no permits are issued to these employees. Washington DC, Montgomery County, Charleston, Boston, and San Francisco also issue permits to household healthcare employees. Annapolis allows for a temporary medical permit for those needing in-home care for \$10 a month for up to six months. In Montgomery County and San Francisco, permits can also be issued for in-home child care.

Educational Permits

Montgomery County, New Orleans, and San Francisco are the only jurisdictions that provide educational permits. In Montgomery County, a student attending a college or university within 50 miles of the county can obtain a permit. In New Orleans, students can apply for a semester parking permit. San Francisco is the only jurisdiction that provides educational employees parking permits (up to 15 per school). Alexandria does not issue such permits.

Other Permits

A few unique permits can be obtained in Montgomery County, Richmond, Williamsburg, and San Francisco. A military/government employee permit can be issued for one year in Montgomery County. Richmond and Williamsburg both allow for a resident to hold special events on their property, thus allowing the resident to obtain a special event permit that allows their guests to park on the street during the event. In San Francisco, a fire station may obtain up to 10 transferrable permits, and also allows a foreign consulate to have up to two transferrable parking permits.

Permit Fees

Most jurisdictions charge a flat per-vehicle rate for each parking permit and no limit on the number of parking permits allowed per property (see Table 3). Boston does not charge a fee for residential parking permits and does not have a limit on the number of permits that can be obtained.

TABLE 3: ANNUAL PERMIT FEES PER VEHICLE FOR EACH JURISDICTION STUDIED

Jurisdiction	1st Car	2nd Car	3rd Car	4+ Cars	Limits/Cap
Alexandria, VA	\$30	\$40	\$150	\$150	No limit
Annapolis, MD ¹	\$55-75	\$55-100	\$55-100	N/A	3
Arlington, VA	\$20	\$20	\$50	\$250	3 (in most zones)
Boston, MA	Free and Unlimited				
Charleston, SC	\$10 for home owner/ \$7.50 for renter	\$10 for home owner/\$7.50 for renter	N/A	N/A	2
Montgomery County, MD	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	No limit
New Orleans, LA	\$30 (\$40 Application fee)	\$30	\$30	\$30	No limit
Pittsburgh, PA	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	No limit
Richmond, VA	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25	No limit
San Francisco, CA	\$136	\$136	\$136	\$136	4
Savannah, GA	Free for home owner/\$175 for renter	Free for home owner/\$175 for renter	Free for home owner/\$175 for renter	N/A	3
Takoma Park, MD ²	\$12.50/20	\$12.50/20	\$12.50/20	\$12.50/20	No limit
Washington, DC	\$35	\$35	\$35	\$35	No limit
Williamsburg, VA	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5	No limit

¹ Annapolis sets different permit fees for each district.

² Takoma Park allows for two-year permits to be purchased

Restrictions

Currently, Alexandria imposes a variety of RPP restrictions, including Monday through Friday or Monday through Saturday starting at 8 AM and ending at various times, depending on the zone (5 PM, 9 PM, 11 PM, and 2 AM). Some RPP zones in Alexandria are in effect on Sundays, from 11 AM to either 11 PM or 2 AM.

The survey of practices in other jurisdictions found the most common RPP restrictions are in place Monday through Friday, usually during standard work hours (8 AM – 5 PM). In Savannah, no RPP signage is posted; those with RPP permits may park at metered spots within their zone free of charge, with some limitations (vehicles are not permitted to park at 15 or 30-minute meters and are not permitted to park in front of commercial establishments). Another common restriction in RPP areas is the amount of time non-residents may park. Many jurisdictions have a two-hour parking limit for non-residents during restricted hours.

About half of the jurisdictions allow for resident-only RPP restrictions, under which nonresidents cannot park in RPP zones for any amount of time (except for nonresidents with visitor permits). This practice varies among jurisdictions. In Williamsburg, all RPP zones are resident-only. In Boston, most RPP zones are resident-only. In Arlington County, Montgomery County, Takoma Park, and Washington DC, residents can petition for resident-only RPP.

Washington DC has placed a moratorium on resident-only parking because it creates a cascading effect, pushing parking demand (and problems) other blocks.

The RPP restrictions for each jurisdiction are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4: RESTRICTIONS FOR EACH JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction	Hours	Days	Length of time for non-residents	Overnight Restrictions	Resident-only
Alexandria, VA	8AM-5PM 8AM-9PM 8AM-11PM 8AM-2AM 11AM-11PM 11AM-2AM 12AM-6AM	Mon-Fri Mon-Sat Daily	2 hours 3 hours	Must be in approved overnight district	No provision for resident-only
Annapolis, MD	8AM-6PM 8AM-12AM	Mon-Fri Mon-Sat Daily	2 hours 3 hours	No	No provision for resident-only
Arlington, VA	8AM-5PM 5PM-1AM	Mon-Fri Sat/Sun	2 hours	No	Yes
Boston, MA	6PM-10AM All times	Mon-Fri	None	Yes	Yes
Charleston, SC	8AM-5PM 8AM-8PM 9AM-6 PM 24-hours	Mon-Fri Daily	1 hour 2 hours 4 hours	Yes	No provision for resident-only
Montgomery County, MD	9AM-5PM 24/7	Mon-Fri Daily	1 hour 2 hours	Yes	Yes
New Orleans, LA	7AM-7PM 7AM-8PM	Daily	2 hours	No	No provision for resident-only
Pittsburgh, PA	7AM-7PM 9AM-7PM 12PM-12AM 11AM-6PM	Mon-Sat	30 minutes 1 hour 2 hours	Yes	No provision for resident-only
Richmond, VA	7AM-9PM 7AM-6PM. 7AM-12AM 7AM-12AM	Mon-Thu Mon-Fri Mon-Sat Daily	1 hour 2 hours	No	No provision for resident-only
San Francisco, CA	8AM-6PM 8AM-9PM	Mon-Fri Mon-Sat	1 hour 2 hours 3 hours 4 hours	No	No provision for resident-only
Savannah, GA	8AM-5PM	Mon-Fri Mon-Sat	As long as needed given meter is paid	No	No provision for resident-only
Takoma Park, MD	7AM-7PM 8AM-7PM 7PM-7AM	Mon-Fri Daily	None	Yes	Yes
Washington, DC	7AM-8:30 PM	Mon-Fri	2 hours	No	In some locations, 50% of the block is set aside for residents-only ¹
Williamsburg, VA	All times	Mon-Fri	None	Yes	Yes

¹ DDOT has placed a moratorium on resident-only parking

Common Program Characteristics

Some of the most common characteristics of RPP programs in the study include:

- All jurisdictions require residents to petition for new RPP areas
- All jurisdictions issue visitor permits (except Boston)
- All charge for residential parking permits (except Boston)
- Half of reporting jurisdictions have some form of a healthcare permit
- A 2-hour parking limit for non-residents is common
- Many jurisdictions do not have late night or overnight restrictions
- About half of the jurisdictions allow for resident-only RPP restrictions.
- Many jurisdictions do not have a limit of the number of vehicles that can have residential permits per household
- None have a maximum size for an RPP area (although Arlington and San Francisco would like to establish a maximum size)

Strengths and Weaknesses of Other Jurisdictions

The study team documented strengths and weaknesses of RPP programs in other jurisdictions based on interviews with respective city and county staff.

One of the recurring challenges faced by other jurisdictions is limiting the physical size of the RPP district. This is a problem because residents within larger zones can have the ability to commute from their residence to their workplace and stay within the same RPP district. As a result, residents who live in the immediate vicinity of areas with limited curb parking must compete with residents from more distant locations. To address this issue, jurisdictions such as Arlington and San Francisco are proposing that future districts be limited in size.

Several jurisdictions noted that RPP fees were low, and in some cases had not been raised for many years. This is especially true in Boston, which does not charge for permits. Ten of the 14 jurisdictions surveyed for this report (including Alexandria) have permit fees of \$30 or less. Other jurisdictions with relatively low permit fees are Another weakness expressed by several RPP programs is overselling or over issuing parking permits. Both in Richmond and Boston, there are concerns about over issuing permits, which results in a parking shortage for residents within the parking zones.

Several noteworthy strengths and weaknesses of RPP programs are noted below:

- Strengths:
 - Boston: Recently raised fines for RPP violations during stadium events in the Fenway/Kenmore District

- Pittsburgh: No longer issues stickers or visitor passes. All permits/passes entered into a database. Enforcement done by scanning license plates.
- Richmond: RPP unit is very engaged with citizens. Attends association meetings and parking meetings.
- Savannah: Instead of posting signs for RPP areas, residents with a permit can simply park for free with no time limit at all metered spots within their residential zone. Enforcement in metered areas is from 8 AM to 5 PM and cost \$2.00 per hour for non-residents for metered parking.
- Areas to Improve:
 - Montgomery County: RPP guided by Executive Regulation and has detailed rules. The more detailed, the more difficult to manage.
 - Savannah: Can be difficult to add new RPP areas. Requires a petition signed by majority of property owners on that street. A strong advocate against the program can prevent the block from getting City Council approval.
 - Washington DC: Need for smaller zones to address inter-ward commuting near Metro stations, etc.
 - Pittsburgh: Permits fees were set either in the early '90s or '80s and have not changed.

Virtual RPP Programs

Montgomery County, Richmond, and Pittsburgh have recently implemented virtual permit programs that eliminate the need for vehicles to display a permit decal or visitor pass. These programs also make the approval process faster – residents can apply and then immediately begin using the parking permit.

Conclusion/Considerations for Alexandria

Alexandria might want to consider the following changes to its current RPP program and practices based on our review of practices in other cities and comments made by RPP program managers in other jurisdictions regarding strengths and areas to improve:

- Provide authority for City staff to create and/or amend RPP areas in consultation with affected communities.
- Review the size of current RPP zones to assess potential concerns about the use of RPP for internal commuting.
- Raise the current fee structure for permits to better align the cost of a permit with the value of an on-street space. Consider different fees for different districts based on parking availability.

- Expand eligibility for permits to include child care providers in addition to healthcare providers.
- Explore the option of implementing a virtual permit program to eliminate the need for vehicles to display a permit decal or visitor pass.

APPENDIX – RPP Signage



Alexandria, VA



Annapolis, MD



Arlington, VA



Boston, MA



Charleston, SC



Montgomery County, MD



New Orleans, LA



Pittsburgh, PA



Richmond, VA



San Francisco, CA

RPP
Signs
Not Used



Takoma Park, MD



Washington, DC



Williamsburg, VA